



**Rabobank**

**Media release  
August 21, 2018**

## **Lessons learned from Aussie visit – NZ farmers take part in South Australian sheep and wool tour**

Five New Zealand sheep farmers were among a group of 30 Australasian farmers who recently spent six days touring south-west Victoria and the Limestone Coast region of South Australia as part of a sheep and wool knowledge tour organised by agricultural banking specialist Rabobank.

Starting in Melbourne, the group travelled through sheep country in south-west Victoria around the Colac, Terang, Cavendish, Hamilton and Coleraine regions before heading into South Australia to Naracoorte and finally, Adelaide.

The tour provided attendees with the opportunity to see first-hand some of Australia's most progressive sheep operations and included visits to processing and vertically-integrated businesses to observe the latest technology in meat and wool, the application of digital technology on livestock farms, carbon farming and the expansion of downstream businesses.

The five New Zealand sheep farmers to attend the event were Derek Daniell from Wairarapa, Judy and David Andrew from Central Otago and Denise and Grant Gilbertson from Gisborne. The farmers were joined on the tour by a number of Rabobank staff including Wanganui-based Agribusiness Area Manager Carl Gibson.

Mr Daniell, who runs Wairere, New Zealand's biggest ram breeding business selling around 3,500 rams per year, said he joined the tour to learn more about the latest developments in Australia's sheep and wool industries and to network with Australian and New Zealand sheep farmers.

"Wairere has a 1,150 hectare ram-selling enterprise in the western districts of Victoria and therefore I was very keen to join the tour to learn more about what's happening in the Australian sheep industry and to pick the brains of the other tour attendees," he said.

Mr Daniell said he had learned a considerable amount from the tour, including the need for producers to be in touch with the biology of their businesses and the benefits of scale.

"We visited several family operations which have started small, with the first stepping stone unit purchased by saving money from shearing, for example. And some of those small starts have grown into big enterprises, he said.

"But farming is a 'high touch' business and it was clear that regardless of size, the owner needs to be in touch with the 'biology' of the business and really understand how any on-farm changes are impacting their stock."



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Mr Daniell said the tour also highlighted the benefit that scale can bring to a sheep farming operation.

“One of the cattle operations we visited in Naracoorte is big enough to have developed a symbiotic relationship with a major retailer which provides massive benefits for their business.” he said.

“By staying in regular contact with the retailer, they are able to share information on what is happening in the market and make adjustments to ensure positive margins for both parties.”

Another key observation from the tour, Mr Daniell said, was the revival in Australia of the fine wool industry and the resulting resurgence in merino farming.

“We visited several farms who grow fine wool and with the big lift in fine wool pricing they were full of enthusiasm,” he said.

“Many of the fine wool farmers in South Australia have started to increase their breeding of merinos and they’re now producing merino sheep which have more fat, grow faster and have a better constitution. These dual-purpose merinos are making farmers money out of meat as well as wool which is a pretty good combo.”

Mr Daniell said hearing the personal stories of the host farmers and other tour participants had, for him, been the most rewarding aspect of the tour.

“I really enjoyed the opportunity to hear the stories from the owners of the businesses we visited on the tour, and, just as much, I appreciated the opportunity to hear the stories of other attendees,” he said.

“The stock agent and the engineer who were the third party to buy a meat processing plant at a mortgagee sale, and turned it into Australia’s biggest sheep plant on one site.

“The son who couldn’t get on with his father on farm, so went to the city and had a successful career in merchant banking, then bought a large farm, and has added extra land to it almost every year.

“Grant from Gisborne, who shored in New Zealand and around the world for 15 years, saved a million dollars, bought his first farm in 1993 and now has 40,000 stock units.

“These stories were inspirational.”

Rabobank’s Carl Gibson said the tour followed the success of the bank’s recent beef tour in the Queensland region and international grains tours to the US, the EU and Black Sea regions.



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“These tours are all about providing our clients with opportunities to take a closer look at what is happening in other parts of the world and sharing knowledge with the other participants.” he said.

“The highlight of the tour for me was taking part in top-quality discussions with passionate farmers who are all looking to improve their own business production and profitability.”

Mr Gibson said there had been excellent feedback on the tour from both New Zealand and Australian participants.

“Several of the Australian participants on the tour expressed an interest in visiting New Zealand to take a closer look at some of our sheep farming operations and we’re currently discussing the possibility of running a similar tour in New Zealand at some stage next year.”

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**Rabobank New Zealand is a part of the global Rabobank Group, the world's leading specialist in food and agribusiness banking. Rabobank has nearly 120 years' experience providing customised banking and finance solutions to businesses involved in all aspects of food and agribusiness. Rabobank is structured as a cooperative and operates in 40 countries, servicing the needs of about 8.6 million clients worldwide through a network of close to 1000 offices and branches. Rabobank New Zealand is one of the country's leading agricultural lenders and a significant provider of business and corporate banking and financial services to the New Zealand food and agribusiness sector. The bank has 33 branches throughout New Zealand.**

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